

Rec center use rises with temperature

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As the temperature rises to triple digits in the Valley, only those who are most experienced (or foolish) continue their workouts outside while the sun is out.

This is when the Tumbleweed Recreation Center sees its largest crowds. Runners and basketball players, the center's summer campers, and teens out of school make the city-run Chandler facility much busier than usual.

"Once it hits summer, the number of people walking through the door does go up," said Erika Berry, one of the center's recreation coordinators.

"Numbers are always higher in the summer."

A combination community center and gym, the center offers day care, summer camps for children, open computer labs, areas designated for teens, and athletic courts on the first floor, and exercise classrooms and equipment on the second floor.

Still, some members said they come because the center, inside Tumbleweed Park, is less crowded than their old gym, and they often get a better deal.

Carol Gurnett, 68, and a Sun Lakes resident, said she attended a gym much closer to her for seven years, but in the months she has attended Tumbleweed she said she has saved more than \$100 in membership fees.

"It's very affordable," she said.

Gurnett goes five days a week, usually with five or six friends, and said she enjoys being able to bring her grandchildren when they visit.

Stephanie Ferrer, 22, switched to the Tumbleweed center from L.A. Fitness because she doesn't have to wait on the side for exercise equipment to open up.

"I wasn't happy with the corporate setting at L.A. Fitness," Ferrer said. "I like it here because it's not always super-crowded, and they offer really great classes."

Tumbleweed Recreation Center has seen a steady increase in visitors since opening in 2008. In its first fiscal year, about 313,000 visited, and center officials estimated they'll have seen about 2,000 more at the end of this fiscal year, according to Chandler budget proposals.

Monthly passes were the most popular in the summer months in 2008, which could be attributed to a burst in popular-



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Nam Nguyen, 5, of Chandler, takes part in arts and crafts during summer camp at Tumbleweed Park Recreation Center in Chandler.

ity after the center opened in April 2008. But the trend continued in 2009. In June, July and August 2009, about 900 a month bought a monthly pass compared to about 800 a month in the fall and about 700 a month in the winter and spring, according to Chandler recreation information specialist Liam O'Mahony.

But the majority coming into the center are children who attend the summer camps and the guardians who are dropping them off, center officials said.

In the summer of last year, about 34,000 people came into the center in both June and July when summer camps are running. About 10,000 fewer people came in during every other month, according to numbers from O'Mahony.

In addition to its youth summer camp, the center also offers activity-specific camps such as sports camp, art camp, performing arts camp and a science and computer camp (a program even offers computer classes for preschoolers and kindergartners). A room is open throughout the day that offers kids the chance to play games like Guitar Hero, Wii Fit and Dance Dance Revolution, or kids can drop in on scheduled games of basketball

or dodge ball.

The center's revenue helps fund its operating costs, but it is relying on mostly city funds for now. The center's goal is to be only 50 percent city-funded by 2012, O'Mahony said.

Berry said the center has had to cut some of its smaller amenities for budget reasons at the city's request, but nothing Tumbleweed staff have felt the need to fight for, she said.

"We're so community-service based," Berry said. "We have to serve the community, so we're ready to adjust in order to stay current and give them what they're interested in."

The center's fees (\$30 a month or \$300 a year for Chandler adults) don't vary too much from typical gym fees, and even with the center's extra facilities and offers such as day passes and sign-ups without start-up fees, area gyms said competing with a government-run facility isn't a problem.

"They're not really competition," said Chris Owens, an assistant manager at Mountainside Fitness in Chandler. "We offer different services," such as a more varied list of classes, she said.

Summer activities at Tumbleweed Recreation Center

Puppet Shows

The Great Arizona Puppet Theater hosts shows for children 5 years old and younger, and parents or guardians are required to attend. They must pre-register at least two weeks prior to showtime.

Fees: Residents \$6, non-residents \$8 and those with family passes get in free (maximum of four children per adult).

Location: Cotton Room North
Shows: The theater will perform "Jack Rabbit and the Desert Tortoise" July 14 from 9 to 10 a.m. and "Cinderella" on Aug. 18 from 1 to 2 p.m.

Camps

Children can enroll in weekly camps through July 23, and fees range from \$78 to \$145 depending on the camp selected. Youth Summer Camp: Children from 5 to 12 years old participate in sports, games, art and crafts, skits, youth development activities and special events. Morning, afternoon or full-day sessions are available. Performing Arts Camp: Children from 6 to 10 years old create a play from script to set design, and camp ends with an on-stage performance.

Science/Computer Camp: Children from 6 to 10 years old explore scientific methods through projects and computer lab time.

Art Camp: Children from 6 to 10 years old develop their art skills through drawing, cartooning, painting, ceramics and other art activities.

Sports Camp: Children from 6 to 10 years old are offered basic sports instruction in basketball, volleyball, soccer and baseball. Group activities will discuss health, nutrition and flexibility.

Family Night

Every Wednesday night features recreational activities or entertainment for families.

Location: Cotton Room North

Times: 5:30-7 p.m.

Fees: Children are \$2-\$3, and teens are \$3-\$4.

The Lounge

The center offers daily games for adults only, including table games, chess, Bunko, Rummy, Wii Sports and billiards.

Fee: Residents \$4, non-residents \$5 and those with passes get in free.